

RECORD OF COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

#2 – Holt Micro-Forest - Food Forest Garden

Sunday 24 October 2021



CONTEXT

In 2021, community members from Holt ran a crowdfunding campaign to raise money to build a micro-forest and nature play space in Holt. They raised just over \$25,000 and have also received an ACT Government 'Nature in the City' grant for \$15,000. More information is available on the [Holt Micro-Forest website](#). The Holt community, working with Capital Regional Community Services, has engaged The Climate Factory to deliver the project.

Concurrently, an application submitted by two community members, Corey Le Mesurier and Arthur Lau, interested in food security applied for an ACT Government 'Community Garden' grant and received \$7,744 to add a food forest garden to the Holt Micro-Forest project.

The Holt community, working with Capital Regional Community Services, will use these grant funds to design and implement an edible food forest element to supplement the broader Holt Micro-Forest project.

On 24 October 2021, a formal consultation session with the Holt community was held via Zoom. The session provided an introduction to the food forest concept and the intent of the food forest project followed by input by the community on species selection, harvest distribution and maintenance. It was also an opportunity for community members to ask questions, clarify concepts and express any concerns.

The online session was led by Corey Le Mesurier and Arthur Lau using the online collaboration tool, Jamboard. Corey and Arthur are leading the design and implementation of the food forest garden with support from the Holt Micro-Forest leadership team.

CONSULTATION SESSION OUTLINE

The topics that were discussed and structure of the meeting was:

- Introduction
- Indicative timeline
- What is a food forest?
- How does it fit into the Holt Micro-Forest project?

- Species selection
- Harvest and distribution of yields
- Maintenance

INVITATIONS

Participants were invited to attend the event through the following channels:

- Holt Micro-forest Facebook group (over 300 members) and Instagram (240 followers)
- The Holt Micro-Forest email database of 162 people

ATTENDEES

In total 11 community members attended the session.

BRIEF SUMMARY

The community were excited and supportive of the food forest garden concept and engagement was robust and constructive. The concept of dividing the food forest garden into discrete themed gardens was supported with agreement on developing a native, berry and citrus themed garden. A range of species for inclusion were provided by the community.

Regarding the distribution of harvests, there was consensus that a trust model with targeted design elements was the most sustainable approach and that the intent of the food forest garden to be a demonstration garden should be highlighted with losses in harvests being expected and unavoidable.

The community agreed that where possible, aligning maintenance activities with the micro-forest would be best as well as fostering community engagement through schools and community groups.

Key themes and values drawn from the consultation sessions include:

- Utilising a diverse selection of edible plants, particularly native species.
- Education over yield being emphasised to encourage and teach people to grow their own food locally.
- Empowering the community to foster a sense of stewardship in regards to care and maintenance of the food forest garden.

SUMMARY BY TOPIC

INTRODUCTION

Corey Le Mesurier advised that following community interest in edible species when discussing the Holt Micro-Forest, an opportunity arose to apply for a Community Garden Grant from the ACT Government.

With the support of Capital Region Community Services, the grant application was successful and \$7,744 has been allocated to add an edible food forest element to the Holt Micro-Forest.

The food forest project benefits from being one part of the bigger micro-forest project and has many benefits for the community to enjoy.

INDICATIVE TIMELINE AND HOW DOES IT FIT INTO THE HOLT MICRO-FOREST PROJECT?

Corey Le Mesurier explained that the food forest project's timeline is slightly behind the main project due to lockdown and waiting for confirmation of funds, but the intention is to proceed in tandem or as close as possible with the main project.

The food forest will have a comparatively small footprint and while there are similarities between both projects, the management and maintenance of the food forest will require some additional considerations such as harvesting and maintenance.

Following the consultation session, the development and implementation of the food forest is anticipated to proceed as per the outline below, but external factors may require flexibility and changes to this timeline.

- November 2021 - develop a draft report summarising the consultation session and begin a draft design of the food forest garden.
- December 2021 to January 2022 - Finalise the report and the design of the food forest garden.
- February 2022 - Obtain formal approvals.
- March 2022 - Complete earthworks.
- April, May and June 2022 - Hold planting days and establish the food forest garden.

WHAT IS A FOOD FOREST?

Corey Le Mesurier discussed the concept behind a food forest garden and advised that a food forest is a garden that mimics the structures of a natural forest, with multiple layers of plants stacked vertically to increase overall production.

Each layer often serves several purposes and work in unison with each other. Possible layers include the overstory, understory, shrubs, herbaceous plants, ground cover plants, a root layer and a climbing layer. Not all food forest gardens have all these layers, but usually have a minimum of three.

By mimicking the characteristics of a forest, food forests often provide a diverse and robust food growing system that is productive and doesn't require many inputs once established.

The implementation of a food forest garden within the Holt community provides an opportunity to use the food forest as an educational resource to trial edible species and to demonstrate how and what to grow in our climate.

SPECIES SELECTION

Corey Le Mesurier advised that the intention with the food forest garden's design was to create five distinct gardens to inspire people for what they can grow in their own yards. Each distinct grouping

of plants could be themed and will have a smaller footprint than the entire garden so will be more easily implemented in a front or back yard.

There may be some necessary inclusions in the food forest garden to perform certain roles and to balance the food forest, but generally, species selection is up to the community. The community were asked to provide input on species selection by dropping ideas into online collaboration tool, Jamboard. A summary is provided below, but the Jamboard can be viewed at Attachment A.

The community endorsed the idea of distinct themed gardens and showed interest in a native garden, a berry themed garden and a citrus garden. Other key ideas put forwards by the community include:

- Pollinator attracting plants such as calendula, cornflower and borage.
- Implementing some trellis designs to allow for vine crops.
- Growing paperbark to use as a wrapping for damper and other foods.
- Utilising a variety of native plants as they are well adapted and attractive.
- Having plenty of herbs, both native and exotic.
- Exploring the option of nut trees, but being mindful of allergies.
- Having stone fruits and other fruits suitable for making jams from.
- Initially planting annual vegetables for an early harvest while the food forest garden is establishing.

HARVEST AND DISTRIBUTION OF YIELDS

Corey Le Mesurier advised that harvests would likely be negligible while the food forest is establishing, but as the community will be stewards of the food forest garden, having an agreed approach to distribution of any future yields is important. Pest pressure will also be a concern noting the local cockatoo and possum population.

The community were invited to share their views on harvests, a summary of which is below and at Attachment A.

- The intent of the food forest garden will largely be as a demonstration garden to provide a model for how and what can be grown in our area, it may not be reasonable to expect large harvests due to the garden being located in a public park that is frequented by various people and wildlife.
- A trust model combined with some strategic design elements was agreed upon as the best way to manage harvests. Design elements may include:
 - A green wall to partially enclose the food forest garden.
 - Prominent signage advising to only take what you need and inviting people to attend harvest events.
 - Fostering and maintaining an engaged community with a sense of stewardship and community for the garden.

The community also discussed developing a network that shares surplus harvests and seedlings from individual's gardens as well as sourcing compost materials from gardens and local eateries. The idea of potentially collaborating with Compost Collective and Capital Scraps to generate compost was discussed and it was agreed to explore what might be possible with them.

MAINTENANCE

Corey Le Mesurier noted that maintenance while the food forest is establishing may be more intensive than the adjacent micro-forest, but can be tied to maintenance and working bee activities for the micro-forest. There is potential to engage local schools and community groups to help with maintenance and we want to empower the community who frequent the park to be able to tidy things up or do a bit of spot maintenance as they walk past or while their kids play. We will also need to consider the best way to ensure local wildlife do not damage the food forest garden. The community provided a number of ideas which are summarised below and at Attachment A.

- Leverage Holt Micro-Forest maintenance activities where possible.
- Empower people to do self-initiated and incidental maintenance through communications, including instructional signage.
- Engage local schools and community groups for maintenance and explore the option to have local children plant into the food forest garden to foster a connection with the garden.
- Provide signage to set expectations on maintenance and potential disruption/loss of harvest from wildlife.
- Mulch heavily to suppress weeds.
- Organise working bees as required.
- Explore raised garden beds and other natural garden shapes, including espaliered plants.
- Explore having a tap/bubbler installed to assist with watering or having an IBC/water tank made available.
- Run pruning demonstrations to educate and empower people on how to maintain fruiting plants.
- Utilise discretionary netting as fruit ripens to protect harvests.

Next steps

The results of this community consultation will be incorporated into the drafting of a landscape design and this consultation report will be distributed to the Holt community for review and comment. The feasibility of options raised in the consultation sessions such as a water facility and composting will be explored and included where possible and practicable.

Attachment A

Holt Micro-Forest - Food Forest Garden Community Consultation

Native liquorice plant		Species you would like to see in the garden	Lemon verbena	Native guava
Pomegranate and persimmons	Fruit trees to make jam from	Climbers: kiwi, grapes and passionfruit	Pollinators - borage, calendula, cornflower	Finger limes
Lemons	Limes	Curry Leaves	Potential nut trees	Lemon myrtle
Lemongrass	Kaffir Lime	Chocolate Lilies	Common culinary herbs	Wattle
Tasmanian Peppers	Yam daisies	Native herbs	Paperbark	Berry patch

